bamboodaze

ASIAN-CANADIAN STUFF FOR THE REST OF US
ISSUE FOUR – SUMMER 2004

shrink/pot/wedding
/food/movie/etc

bambooda

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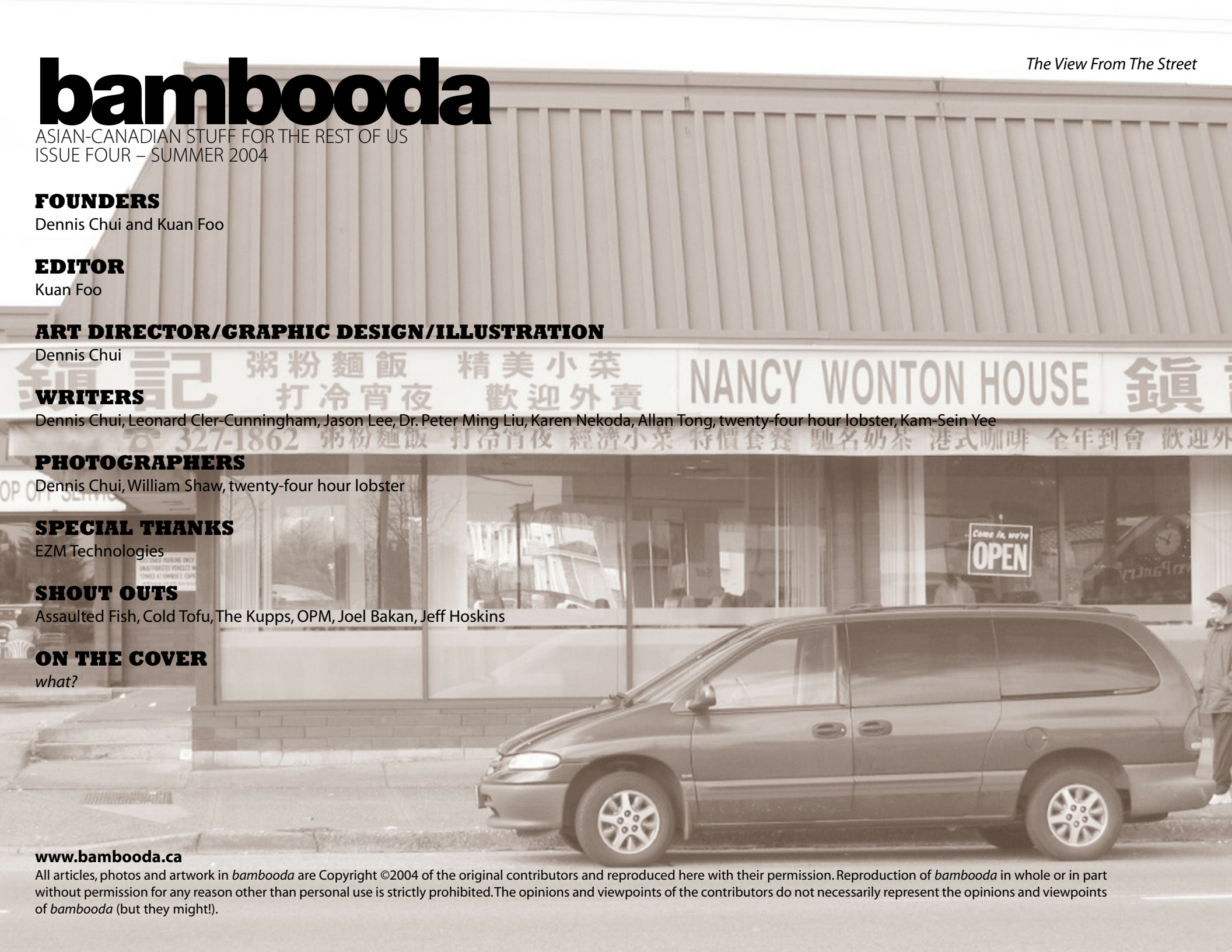

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ON THE COVER
what?

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Founders' Message

Last year, we put out our "Fall Issue" around Halloween. Winter and Spring slipped by pretty damn quickly, without any new issues from us. All we can say is that this whole publishing thing is really hard when you've got work and life to deal with. That's why we'd like to thank all of our loyal contributors who have taken precious time out of their busy schedules to write the articles that keep this 'zine alive.

We'd also like to thank you (the readers) for downloading and reading our little magazine, when there are millions of other things you could be reading, watching or playing. It makes us really happy knowing that you chose us. We hope to bring you even more interesting stuff to read in the near future.

Have a great summer
Dennis and Kuan

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SHRINK WRAP

Ottawa-based registered psychologist Dr. Peter Ming Liu shares his thoughts regarding Asian-Canadians and the mental health system

Psychology is a relatively modern field that originated in Western Europe at the end of the 19th century. Although dominated through most of its history by white males with rigid and dogmatic schools of thought, in recent years psychology has grown increasingly inclusive of diverse perspectives, adapting and evolving to fit the needs of a changing society. The past few decades have seen many psychologists and social workers become interested in ethnic minority mental health with a corresponding growth in research and clinical training in this area. However, while more non-white individuals in North America are deciding to enter psychology, we are still vastly underrepresented. According to the 2001 Canadian Census, nearly 10% of the population identified as being of Asian descent, and that figure is still growing. However, there are still not very many Asian-Canadian mental health service providers and the few that are practising tend

to be clustered around cities with large Asian-Canadian communities such as Vancouver or Toronto. For example, to my knowledge, out of 326 registered psychologists in Ottawa, there are only three Asian-Canadians and of those, I am the only one in private practice. At the same time, the need for mental health resources for the Asian community is far greater than the supply. Rates of mental illness in the Asian-Canadian community are difficult to ascertain, but growing research in this area consistently indicates that Canadians of Asian descent consistently underutilize the mental health system.

One reason for the short supply of Asian-Canadian service providers is that, despite the high proportion of Asian-Canadian students who complete university, a relatively small number major in psychology, and hardly any go on to graduate studies in the field. There are several possible reasons for this. First, Asian parents of high school and university students often hold strong influence or control over their children's educational and career choices, traditionally favouring more "practical" areas such as the sciences (e.g., engineering, computer science, mathematics), medicine, and business. These parents may perceive a degree in psychology as a dead-end with little use after graduation and their children may internalize this attitude, affecting their career choices. Other Asian-Canadian students may have also inherited attitudes that reflect a discomfort with the field of psychology itself. Studying psychology or social work may be perceived as indicating personal emotional problems, or perhaps even presenting a high risk of becoming mentally ill simply from working with disturbed individuals. Another possible explanation for the low levels of interest is simply that psychology is still very much a white-dominated field, which can be daunting. With so few Asian-Canadian psychology professors, social workers, guidance counsellors, clinical psychologists and other role models, it can feel very much against the current to pursue this path. Finally, for Asian-Canadian students who have learned English (or French) as a second language, studying psychology, with its emphasis on reading, writing and oral language skills, can be especially challenging.

This lack of Asian-Canadians entering the field inevitably leads to a reluctance for many Asian-Canadians to use mental health services. In order to feel comfortable discussing personal problems, clients need to relate to the therapist and feel a sense of trust and confidence that they will be heard and understood. If a client is from a cultural background outside of mainstream, the barriers to seeking treatment can be significantly greater.

Of course, many white clinicians can and do provide Asian-Canadian clients with satisfactory mental health services. However, most Asian-Canadian clinicians have the benefit of personal knowledge and experiences — a familiarity of cultural norms, traditional expectations and family dynamics — that help them to understand and relate to clients of the same background. Most of us have also had first hand experiences of marginalization, discrimination and the challenge of adjusting to life in Canadian society. Asian-Canadian clients often

feel more comfortable knowing that the personal information they are sharing will be understood in cultural context, which facilitates trust and rapport in their therapist. Language can also be a significant barrier to clients seeking help for psychological concerns, as it can be very difficult expressing feelings and thoughts in one's second language. Asian-Canadian clients with weak English skills or very thick accents tend to experience higher levels of discrimination and more difficulties being understood by professionals who do not speak their first language. In general, the lower the degree of acculturation to Canadian norms, the less likely the individual will seek psychological help.

Other common experiences for Asian-Canadian clients are: fear of stigma associated with seeing a mental health professional; feelings of personal shame in disclosing negative emotions; fears that confidential information might be disclosed to others; and skepticism about the usefulness of psychotherapy. It is not unusual for clients to express strong feelings of ambivalence and resistance about engaging in treatment, with a high degree of initial discomfort in discussing personal problems or stressful experiences. Some clients have also had negative experiences of the health care system, or perhaps no prior exposure to mental health professionals, which could make the process of seeking help especially scary and uncomfortable.

Unfortunately, professionals who encounter these challenges and difficulties in working with Asian-Canadians may conclude that members of this population do not wish mental health treatment, or benefit poorly from it. Some may also believe that specialized mental health services that target the Asian-Canadian community are not necessary. However, American research data on Asians consistently indicate that where specially targeted psychological services are provided, usage increases dramatically. For example, in Toronto, a metropolitan area with a particularly large Asian population, the Hong Fook Mental Health

The stereotype of Asians as emotionally closed in therapy is false…I have often found Asian clients to be every bit as emotionally expressive and direct as white clients

Association (**www.hongfook.ca**) was founded in the late 1970s to address the needs of the Chinese community. Over the last decades, the group has served increasing numbers of clients, and has since expanded to serve other Asian communities, including Vietnamese and Cambodian, with case management, psychiatric care, counselling, and translation services. On the West coast, the Vancouver/Burnaby branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association has developed several programs to assist the growing Chinese population, including workshops, presentations, and support groups. These are only two successful examples of educational outreach and mental health services that target Asian-Canadians, and hopefully conditions will continue to improve across Canada.

As a clinical psychologist in private practice with many Asian-Canadian clients, I have found that ambivalence, fear, and resistance when seeing a mental health professional are actually quite common, regardless of cultural background. I believe the need to be heard, understood, supported, and not judged is a universal one, and that there are many understandable fears to opening up and sharing your emotional life with a stranger. I have found that most of my Asian-Canadian clients tend to experience more initial defensiveness than the average white Canadian client, asking more direct questions about my background and education, testing my cultural knowledge, and sometimes my ability to communicate in Chinese. However, I have also found that once trust and rapport is established, Asian clients often experience tremendous relief to express feelings and experiences that they find extremely difficult to discuss with others, if they discuss them at all. Many clients have reported great pressure to suppress their negative emotions, for the greater good of the family or to preserve face. One of the interesting things I've found in my practice is that the stereotype of Asians as emotionally closed in therapy is false. In fact, after trust is established, I have often found Asian clients to be every bit as emotionally expressive and direct as white clients. Another commonly held view is that Asians don't stay in therapy, often terminating their sessions prematurely. In my experience, I have not found this to be the case, and have had the privilege of assisting many Asian-Canadian clients over time to achieve their therapeutic goals.

I continue to be very concerned about the ongoing difficulties facing Asian-Canadians. We greatly need more of us to enter the mental health field, more research on the needs of our community, and more expansion of educational, prevention, and intervention programs targeted to Asian-Canadians. We are at another turning point in history in the field of psychology, as the study of diversity enters the mainstream. If we can continue to demystify and destigmatize mental health issues, challenge racism and discrimination, and improve the common understanding of culture and ethnicity in the 21st century, the time of Asian-Canadians on the fringes of the mental health system will one day be relegated to history.

DR. PETER MING LIU has written for a number of publications and was the author of the "Chicken Feet for the Soul" advice column for *banana* magazine.

5th Vancouver Chinatown Festival

August 7 & 8, 2004 ◆ 500-block Columbia Street, Vancouver Chinatown ◆ 12PM – 11PM

The annual Chinatown Festival is the largest day-time summer event in Vancouver's authentic Chinatown. Last year, over 38,000 people including local residents and tourists basked in the series of mesmerizing performances and fascinating activities in Chinatown during the 2-day Festival. Highlights of the 5th Vancouver Chinatown Festival will include:

★ Chinatown heritage and cuisine walking tour. While strolling through the rich history of Chinatown with its' fine collection of heritage buildings, clan associations, shops, temples and other unique attractions rarely open to the public, you can sample world-renowned Chinese delicacies that will bring you enjoyment and satisfaction.

★ Traditional Chinese folk art live demonstrations by artists from China. Come and see yourself how the strong colors, solid images, auspicious themes, rich and genuine compositions are expressed in a variety of Chinese folk art forms.

★ Chinatown Youth Talent Showdown 2004. A contest that opens to all performers between the ages of 15 – 21. Total value of over $5,000 in Trophies, Cash, and other Prizes, will be awarded to three winners. Contest participants will have not only the opportunity to hone their performance skills, but also a unique experience to showcase their talents to local residents and tourists at Vancouver's authentic Chinatown.

★ Stage performances at 500-block Columbia Street. From traditional lion dances, martial arts demonstrations, multicultural dances, singing … just non-stop entertainment!

The young ones will be pleased by the games and activities just designed for children. Everyone is also invited to try appetizers at the food booths, select favourite items from the sidewalk sale, visit community open houses, and stay for the Chinatown Night Market. Don't forget to take pictures at all the new attractions in Chinatown such as the West Han Dynasty Bell, the Canadian Chinese Memorial Square, and all the heritage buildings.

★ Come to Vancouver Chinatown for the perfect weekend treat on August 7 & 8. Free admission.

For more information, please contact the Vancouver Chinatown BIA Society at 604-632-3808, fax 604-632-3809, or visit website: www.vancouver-chinatown.com

THE EMPTY HOT POT — THE ASIAN-CANADIAN'S GUIDE TO SURVIVING FOOD

By Kam-Sein Yee

What's in your hot pot today? If you said nothing — I would understand. Between Avian Flu, Mad Cow, contaminated seafood and the Atkins dieting craze, it seems like nothing is safe these days. For North American Asians who live to eat, this makes choosing the contents of the hot pot a little more challenging. Let us guide you through some of the basics:

WHO'S CHICKEN OF CHICKEN?

Can you think of any Asian holiday that does not involve the lowly chicken? It just doesn't seem the same: Chickens and Asians go together like white and rice. When my mother first came to Canada, you could pick out

your live chickens in Vancouver's Chinatown and have them wring their neck on the sidewalk. Chinatown, to say the least, was pungent.

With the coming of Avian Flu, a virus that originated in Asia and has come to BC via infected poultry, everything has changed. It was believed that the strain in Canada affected poultry and caused only mild symptoms in humans and was therefore not a threat to the general population.

We now know that, in British Columbia at least, the "species barrier" may be have been crossed; it depends on the virus's strain. H7 is deadly to chickens but produces very mild symptoms in humans. However, H5, the "killer" strain that caused deaths in humans in Asia, may be present in bird farms in BC, at least one of which is located next door to an elementary school. So far, massive "depopulation" has removed much of the threat. The likelihood of confirming the H5 strain in BC's chicken is considered very, very low.

So, Is it safe to eat poultry from areas affected by avian influenza?

Health Canada states in their release, *"There is no public health risk associated with the consumption of cooked poultry meat or eggs as a result of these cases. Health Canada advises that poultry products and eggs from areas experiencing an outbreak of avian flu do not pose a risk to human health for avian flu."* (April 2nd, 2004)

TERIYAKI ROULETTE?

What's a hot pot without the delicate, paper-thin pink slices of rare beef? It would be a Shabby Shabu indeed. Since the discovery of the first confirmed infected cow in Canada in May 2003, the fight between Canada and United States has escalated into hysteria. Yet, politics aside, we Asians are just wondering whether eating this succulently stewed beef brisket will turn our brains into tofu in ten years time?

Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis (BSE) can sometimes take decades to manifest itself. X-rays show that BSE victims end up with brains that look like Swiss cheese, ultimately leading to a miserable demise. BSE is believed to have been caused by farmers feeding the ground up brains and bones of infected cows and sheep to other cattle and dairy cows as a form of cheap protein. Several ranches in western Canada have been quarantined until further investigation. On top of this there are the lingering issues surrounding growth hormone injections, E-coli and antibiotic resistant beef (growth hormone not used in Canada). E-coli has been around forever, and is the reason why you should always eat your hamburger well done and never pink. Teriyaki Roulette anyone?

BSE victims end up with brains that look like Swiss cheese...

TOFU AND YOU — THE JOY OF SOY?

Soy, a wonder protein, has been a staple of Asian diets all over the world. It is cheap, flexible and abundant and has been a media darling in the west for its strong health claims. It's the primary source of protein for the Asian vegetarian. How many ways can you eat soy now? It's come a long way from the mushy squares that your mum scooped from a plastic bucket in Chinatown and smothered with shrimp sauce. Now you can get soy chips, dips, candy, smoothies, chocolate bars, ice cream, and even pate. The next time you buy something from the supermarket, have a look to see if soy oil is on the label. It's in everything. It is low in fat, low in sodium, reduces heart disease by being low in cholesterol, and reduces symptoms of menopause (not that you were worried about that right now).

According to the Soyfoods Association of North America: "The double-digit growth in Asian populations in the United States has fueled demand for traditional soy foods. Americans also are eating more Asian foods, which often include soy." Recently however, soy has come under fire. It looks like soy is not always a joy. The main health-giving chemical, Isoflavones that are a type of phytoestrogen, may wreak havoc, especially in woman. They mimic a powerful hormone, estrogen, which may affect certain populations of women and encourage the risk of breast cancer (controversial). Soy has also been controversially been linked to peanut allergies in infants and children.

RICE — NOT SO NICE?

White rice, another seemingly innocuous staple of the Asian diet, has been under fire for years as a recipe for diabetes, especially for North Americans Asians. Refined white rice, despite its popularity, actually has very little nutritional value; it is a simple starch which is broken down very quickly in the body.

Even though diseases like diabetes are on the rise among North American Asians, they are finding it difficult to give up white rice and switch to healthier brown or wild rices. "Golden rice," a genetically modified rice that is highly sustainable and extremely nutritious (modified to include vitamin A) is still awaiting introduction — a case where the anti-GM lobby should get off its high horse and get on board.

Those of you who are on the Atkin's Diet are well aware that rice is a big no no. If anyone could invent the Asian version of Atkins diet, they'd be a millionaire. No more "rice handles" on the waistline.

FRANKENFISH?

Prawn farms are destroying pristine mangrove forests in South East Asian with their pollution, farmed salmon are threatening wild stocks, and heavy metals and PCB's are showing up in fish in general. So much for fish on Fridays. It often surprises many Asian women when they become pregnant that they should avoid sushi. They can stick to cooked rolls but the danger of heavy metal and parasitic worms are a danger to the fetus. Yet the fish concerns may soon become a moot point with the current fishing practices of some countries (including Canada) that are on the verge of wiping out many of the tasty treats that that we fry up and serve with rice. Twenty-eight percent of fish stocks worldwide are either over-fished or nearing extinction; another 47% are near the limits of sustainability.

Visit www.montereybayaquarium.org for the latest information on what seafood to avoid and what to partake. Its updated twice a year and what makes the list is a combination of environmentally safe practices and health perspective.

Enjoy: Abalone, farmed clams, Canadian snow crab, farmed tiapla, tuna (yellowfin, albacore and bigeye). Avoid: Atlantic cod, rockfish, wild caviar, imported shrimp and Canadian wild Salmon at the moment.

SO WHAT'S ACTUALLY SAFE TO EAT?

Veggies are still really good if a little genetic modification doesn't worry you. It seems genetically modified foods (GMO) have been popping up everywhere, including your fruits and vegetables. This in itself is not so bad, but people are still very suspicious that you are getting beet genes in your carrots. Overall, GMO foods are not that big a concern in Canada and have allowed our farmers to be more productive without as much pesticide or fertilizer: up to 70% of all packaged goods contain GM ingredients.

How about pesticides? Should you start an organic farm? Not really, according to Bruce Colquhoun, Soil Scientist and Agricultural Expert type guy, who recently returned from Ottawa, where he was lobbying MPs to actively promote the fact that Canadian Food is exceptionally safe. "The uptake of harmful metals and pesticides is so low that you would have to eat hundreds of pounds of bok choy a day for the rest of your life in order

for there to be any harmful effects from the applied pesticides."

What else is Asian, ancient and green and still darn good for you? That's right, Green Tea. The health benefits of drinking green tea have not been lost on Chinese and Japanese. For four thousand years, they have enjoyed lower rates of cancer, increased immune function, decreased cholesterol and types of arthritis. Green tea contains antioxidants, which are powerful inhibiters of cancer cells, but leave healthy tissue alone. But did you know that green tea has also been beneficial as a diet aid, in preventing tooth decay, and in skin cream. The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition did studies that showed that green tea was even beneficial in reducing calories.

Mind you, the best therapeutic qualities of tea are found in green tea, not black or oolong teas, which are processed differently. Hot green tea is not like sucking back a Starbucks, you just can't do it quickly. So take some time and enjoy a cup of tea. The only negative side is that the caffeine might keep you awake and alert for longer than you like. How much should you drink per day? About 2 cups of day should introduce to you to the miracle benefits of green tea.

Compared to what we think our ancestors used to eat, live monkey brains, ground up rhinoceros horns, pigs blood soup, and hundred year old eggs, I think we are doing ok.

Until they tell me otherwise, I'm still going to enjoy my two favorite Asian staples, Strawberry Pocky and frozen durian.

KAM-SEIN YEE used to have a food fetish.

MORE INFO ON THE WEB

Avian Flu
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/diseases/flu/avian.html

Mad Cow
http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/madcow/

Soy
http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2000/300_soy.html

Canada – Safe Food
http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/foodfacts/storagee.shtml
http://www.foodreference.com/html/arthowsafeisourfood.html

United States
http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/

THREE WEDDING DRESSES

By Karen Nekoda

A few weeks ago, while I was at home visiting my parents, my mother took me upstairs to the hall closet of the house we've lived in for over 23 years, and pulled out a large flat box. I could smell the mothballs before she opened it, revealing a *kimono* (the traditional Japanese outfit) that she had worn to her wedding over 42 years ago. It was garment I had only seen in pictures. The photos are mostly black and white, which make them seem even older than they are. My mother and father look innocently into the camera with their young faces. It's the eyes that strike me first. They're both calm and collected, showing no emotion. They are in Hiroshima, Japan, and my father is visiting from Canada to "seal the deal." She looks beautiful and the kimono is new. It is cream and olive in tone, there are pink flowers adorning the front, and her maiden family crest is depicted on the back. All throughout the silk robe, there is gold threading. I can see stains on the long sleeves and on the cloth that hugs the nape of the neck. Stains from my parents' wedding day. She drapes it on my shoulders to see if it's a good fit. It's a perfect fit. She shows it to me for the first time because I too, am getting married.

A few weeks before that, I sat in my fiancé's living room with his mother, just hours after announcing our engagement. After bowing to his family and receiving their blessing for our marriage, she told me that she would like to buy me a *hanbok* (the traditional Korean outfit) in Korea to wear on our wedding day. As I did not have much contact with her during all the years I

DENNIS CHUI

dated my fiancé, it came as a pleasant and heartwarming surprise. I know how important these cultural traditions are and I will do anything and everything to make sure they are incorporated into our special day. I will wear the hanbok during a Korean ceremony called *Paebaek* at the reception. The bride bows deeply and pays respects to her new in-laws, and gifts are exchanged. She and her new husband hold a silk scarf in which they try catch figs, dates and other symbols of fertility thrown by their elders. I am told that in Korea, Paebaek is usually held in the groom's home and is a small intimate affair but in North America, Koreans often opt to hold this ceremony in front of extended family and guests and bow to more elders than just immediate in-laws.

Fast forward to today. I've spent hours scouring magazines for the perfect white gown. I've tried a few on in front of my mother and girlfriends and agonized over the style, colour and cost. I've contemplated buying vs. renting. I've had dreams where I'm floating on top of the dance floor with my new husband; my train bustled into a perfect cascade behind me.

So here we are, trying to plan a multi-cultural and semi multi-faith wedding...

I always knew I would wear a white gown on the day I got married, because that's just what girls here do. Okay, maybe not all girls, but many do, even if they honour other cultural traditions from the 'homeland.' To be honest, the fairytale dress fantasy was never something I had until now. I spent most of my formative years in boys clothing and running around the schoolyard and gymnasium instead of playing dress up with Barbie dolls. As my relationship with my fiancé "H" became serious, however, I started to think more about what kind of wedding we would have if we 'ever' got married (we dated seven years before getting engaged!). Even though my family belongs to a Japanese Buddhist temple, in Canada, it is acceptable to wear the white gown and walk down the temple aisle towards your love.

In modern day Japan, couples are now opting to marry "Western style," which means having a Caucasian priest marry them with Christian vows even if they are not of Christian faith.

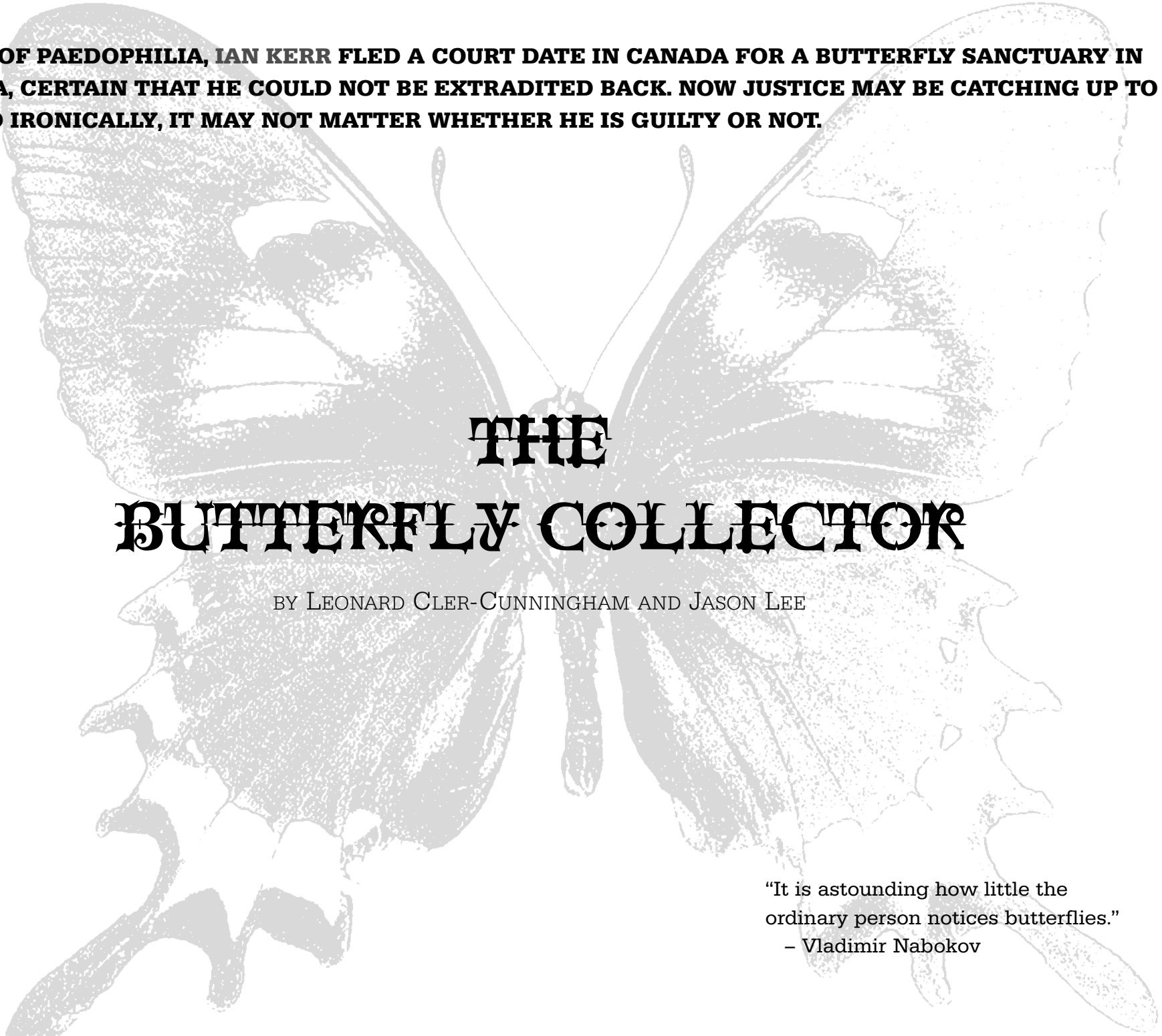
In the past, Japanese weddings were traditionally Shinto ceremonies, with the bride wearing an elaborate white kimono and headdress and the groom wearing a black hakama. Although, Japan is home to several religions, Shinto weddings became the norm no matter which one you belonged to. Today, thanks to the influence of television and Hollywood glamour, a Japanese bride can choose to wear only a white dress for her Christian church ceremony, followed by a cocktail dress during the reception just like we do here — no kimono. Either way, weddings were not really a 'Buddhist' affair in Japan unless your family was really religious. This is probably why second and third generation Japanese Buddhist brides in North America have been able to combine religion with western culture so well.

So here we are, trying to plan a multi-cultural and semi multi-faith wedding. Since H's mother is Catholic, we decided to have the Buddhist ceremony in a non-denominational chapel on the property of our banquet hall. It will feel very church like, but our vows will be based on Buddhist scriptures and the minister will light incense before the ceremony. We'll chant the prayers and then exchange *o-juzus*, which are Buddhist beads, as well as wedding rings. During the reception, I will change into my mother's kimono and then the hanbok for the Paebaek. It sounds complicated, I know, and will probably need a lot of carefully thought out coordinating, but in the end I think it will be wonderful. It will be a perfect mix of our heritage and faith. H and I want to make sure that both the Japanese and Korean culture will be properly represented because we know how important this is to one another. As much as we love being Canadian, we also admit that marrying someone of a different background can create quite a challenge in keeping up with the many traditions our families brought over and carried out for years and years. My own family has lost some Japanese traditions already, having been in Canada for almost a century now, but we make up for this fact by recognizing that we have gained a number of wonderful "Canadian" ones along the way. H's family is also not following all wedding traditions they would if they were in Korea and have been understanding and supportive of us too. Similarities exist between Japanese and Korean culture, but for every similarity there is also a difference. We know this and we embrace this. If we start off on the right foot at the wedding, the chances that our marriage and our children will benefit from this effort are good.

I'm looking forward to our wedding day very much, but to the marriage even more. During the seven years we dated, H and I learned much about one another and have gone through many ups and downs together. We survived a lot and I'm confident that we'll survive whatever happens in the future, too. The fact that we are of different backgrounds doesn't matter to me because we share a deeper understanding about who we are today rather than concentrating on where we came from yesterday. As long as we can pass this on to our children, and our children's children, I will be happy. If things go as well as they are going right now, our future is looking bright.

KAREN NEKODA will be wearing white (and several other colours) on her wedding day.

ACCUSED OF PAEDOPHILIA, IAN KERR FLED A COURT DATE IN CANADA FOR A BUTTERFLY SANCTUARY IN CAMBODIA, CERTAIN THAT HE COULD NOT BE EXTRADITED BACK. NOW JUSTICE MAY BE CATCHING UP TO HIM…AND IRONICALLY, IT MAY NOT MATTER WHETHER HE IS GUILTY OR NOT.



THE BUTTERFLY COLLECTOR

BY LEONARD CLER-CUNNINGHAM AND JASON LEE

"It is astounding how little the ordinary person notices butterflies."
– Vladimir Nabokov

APRIL, 1999 — VANCOUVER

BOARDING THE PLANE, IAN KERR WAS ONLY SLIGHTLY PREOCCUPIED BY THE LOOSE ENDS HE WAS LEAVING BEHIND. YES, HE'D LEFT A LUCRATIVE MEDICAL PRACTICE IN KAMLOOPS, BRITISH COLUMBIA BUT 60 WAS A GOOD AGE AT WHICH TO RETIRE. HE HAD PUT IN ENOUGH YEARS PRACTICING MEDICINE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA'S REMOTE RURAL COMMUNITIES AND WAS CONVINCED THAT HE'D EARNED THE WELL-DESERVED, IF UNSCHEDULED, RETIREMENT IN THE TROPICAL PARADISE OF CAMBODIA.

He knew the perfect place to open a little bed and breakfast: Siam Reap, about two hundred kilometres north-west of Phnom Penh, right next to Cambodia's biggest tourist magnet, the 1,200 year old temples at Angkor Wat.

Cambodia's borders had only opened in the early '90s and with its still somewhat active rebel movement, a proliferation of landmines and the legacy from a generation of genocide it was relatively unspoiled in comparison to the fading, over-travelled beauty of Thailand. Cambodia was the new 'it' destination for legions of Lonely Planet backpackers and Kerr intended to cash in on the opportunity.

The best perk of all: no extradition treaty with Canada. There was no chance that he would ever have to go back to Canada unless he chose to — and that wasn't likely.

Kerr had left behind more than just a few loose ends — he was skipping out on his September trial date where he faced two counts of indecent assault and a count of gross indecency. The women charging him were former patients of his in Powell River, BC. One was eight years old and the other thirteen when the alleged assaults occurred. And as Kerr watched the city disappear under the clouds, the RCMP was busy looking for possible victims in other areas where he had worked, the kind of small towns in British Columbia where people want to believe "that kind of thing never happens here": Stewart, Pender Harbour, Nakusp, Dawson Creek, and Kamloops.

* * *

February, 2000 — Siam Reap

In Cambodia, Kerr easily slipped into the role he cast for himself — the retired English country doctor from Canada. He had graduated from medical school in London, England in 1970 and soon after set off for Canada. He held two passports: one Canadian and the other UK.

Things were turning out far better than he had ever thought they would. Through the Internet

one of
Nabokov's
butterfly paintings

One of Nabokov's
butterfly paintings

he was able to keep up to date on his story. A nation-wide warrant for sexual assault was issued when he failed in to appear in court, but as far as Canadian authorities and the press were concerned, he had simply disappeared off the face of the earth. Slowly, Kerr shed his fear of ever being discovered and settled into his existence as one of the increasing number of expatriates living in Siam Reap.

May–December romances weren't uncommon for a man of Kerr's means living in a third world country – expat men offered Cambodian women the kind of financial security they could only dream of. Samnang (translates as "lucky") thought herself aptly named; Kerr may have been almost 40 years older than she was, but he was a gentle man seemingly free of the vulgar habits that plagued other foreigners. He was charming and affable and they married shortly after meeting. He made her a business partner in the bed and breakfast – The European Guest House – and her sister even got a job working in the kitchen. They advertised the 12-room inn on the Internet, billing it as "clean, inexpensive, and run to European standards." Kerr, was now so comfortable in his new life, he had included his name as the booking contact.

Ray Rudowski was jaunting through Southeast Asia writing those kind of squishy soft travel pieces the market has an insatiable appetite for. A young Canadian couple he met began raving about the affordable ($4 to $7 a night) undiscovered gem of a guesthouse in Siam Reap. Cambodia was still relatively new on the travel destination list, so an article like that could be a relatively easy sell. He pitched the piece to one of the editors on his list and headed off to Siam Reap to check it out.

Kerr and Samnang were excited about the extra business the coverage might bring and started daydreaming about expanding their business ventures. If you visit Cambodia, the temples at Angkor Wat are a must see and if you go to Angkor Wat you stay in Siam Reap. Cambodia was quickly becoming the new hip and seductive travel destination and they were in on the ground floor with nowhere to go but up. It seemed to have worked out for Kerr. His new life was good. Rudowski recalls, "He certainly wasn't shy about talking to me. He couldn't have been more charming."

Unfortunately, Kerr got a little more attention than he bargained for when a former co-worker recognized his picture from the article. The Canadian

authorities started making inquiries and articles began appearing in the Canadian press. In a follow up phone interview with Rudowski, Kerr justified his flight from justice: "This was a patient who alleged that I examined her improperly 25 years ago and it was going to cost me $10,000 for a lawyer to fight this … The whole thing is ridiculous, it was 25 years ago, didn't happen anyway and I've got no way of fighting that … so I thought 'screw this' … so I left".

Exposed and vulnerable, Kerr did what came naturally – he disappeared for a second time.

February 2004

I was doing background research for a documentary on another Canadian with an alleged predilection for young girls who had also fled to Asia – Bryan Johnson. During the 1980s, as the Asia correspondent for the *Globe and Mail*, Johnson had written a searing and vivid front-page series on child prostitution in the Philippines that helped to bring the topic to international attention. Ten years later, Sean O'Malley wrote one of the great magazine feature articles of the '90s, "Our Man in Manila," a powerful first person account of tracking down Johnson, his boyhood hero. Johnson had abandoned his wife, colleagues and career to open up his own kiddy club called Brown Sugar in Manila's sex tourist zone. I was going to pose as a drunken sex tourist on a debauched holiday and document the story from the inside. Johnson's story would provide the narrative arc. At the end of the journey I would hunt him down for an interview – a modern day *Heart of Darkness* story with Johnson as our Kurtz.

I repackaged the documentary for sale as a freelance magazine article, but the focus was simply too big for print. So I had narrowed it down to Cambodia – new, sexy, unknown and starting to receive a lot of negative international press as a paedophile refugee centre – when I came across the story of Dr. Ian Frances Kerr. I got in touch with the local Kamloops paper to get more background information and was told that, by coincidence, I was the second person that week to inquire about him. Apparently, somebody in Cambodia was also interested in Kerr. The paper had little information and was happy to forward me the email of the contact in Cambodia.

It turned out Kerr hadn't left Cambodia – he simply relocated.

The world's best-known paedophile is perhaps Humbert Humbert, the central character in Nabokov's classic novel *Lolita*, the tale of a grown man's sexual obsession with a 12-year girl. It's not as well known that Nabokov's true passion wasn't literature but butterflies. He wrote over twenty still well-regarded scientific papers on the subject, discovered previously unknown species and even organized the Harvard Museum's collection.

Irony isn't the sole province of literature – Kerr is

Another Nabokov painting

another Nabokov painting

now running a butterfly garden and employing local street children to collect the butterflies. The contact noted that this puts him in close proximity to tourists and their children, "It seems like the perfect place to take the kids, and he gets a steady stream of children visiting."

Even though the community was aware of the outstanding charges for sexual assault involving children, Kerr had the sympathy and support of Siam Reap's expats who believed he was as he portrayed himself: the hapless victim of a vicious and misguided witch-hunt in Canada – a scenario that recent events in Cambodia has made quite plausible.

International scrutiny has sparked a crackdown on the foreign sex trade in a number of Asian countries, notably the Philippines and Thailand. Cambodia, its endemic poverty, political disarray and corrupt law enforcement was the next target.

In Cambodia paedophilia has evolved into a big business where even the good guys stand to make a decent dollar. There's increasing suspicion that many local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are motivated in part by large foreign donor packages they can potentially receive in exchange for high-profile arrests of foreign paedophiles.

According to an article published in the Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER) in March of this year, "some of these [NGOs] may be operating outside legal and ethical boundaries in a bid to get results and obtain essential foreign funding." This

Kerr's butterfly garden in Cambodia

Kerr's Butterfly Garden in Cambodia

Kerr with kids in the garden

Kerr with kids in the garden

PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE COURTESY OF WILLIAM SHAW

Postcards from
Ian Kerr's Butterfly
Garden

Postcards from Ian Kerr's Butterfly Garden

includes holding young witnesses against their will, making payments to local police to assist in investigations, paying for testimony and assisting and encouraging alleged victims to sue for financial compensation that in some cases represents a financial windfall in excess of 40 years of wages.

Among examples cited in the FEER article is the case of Thouk Sam Ang. The 11-year old claimed she was held prisoner for nearly two week by the Phnom Penh-based Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre and put under great pressure to testify that Graham Cleghorn, a family friend, had sexually abused her. The article quotes Thouk as saying, "They said that Graham and [his Cambodian wife] Toeur had already confessed … They said I should sue him and take all his money," She denied that she was touched or sexually abused and this was borne out by medical testing. She was only released when her mother came looking for her, and never appeared in court. Earlier this year, Cleghorn was convicted of raping five girls aged 15-17 sentenced to 20 years in prison and ordered to pay US$2,000 compensation to the families of each of the five victims. He is among a handful of recent high profile arrests of foreigners living in Cambodia.

* * *

Kerr's time is running out. If he was fleeing a trial where he felt he had little chance of receiving a fair hearing, then he's chosen the wrong place to run to. According to the contact in Cambodia, "He is being tracked by at least two local NGOs, both of whom stand to win large donor funding packages for his

arrest…they may not wait to find children he has actually abused and construct a case properly on evidence but instead just round up any ten street children and get him that way."

Nabokov once wrote of the solace he received from butterflies: "…the highest enjoyment of timelessness … is when I stand among rare butterflies and their food plants. This is ecstasy, and behind the ecstasy is something else, which is hard to explain. It is like a momentary vacuum into which rushes all that I love. A sense of oneness with sun and stone."

In failing health, Kerr has little left save the Butterfly Garden, which has been set up in such a way that nothing inside the walls can be observed from the outside. Trees are planted in line with the second story windows across the road effectively blocking the neighbour's views inside. Curtains hang in the front and a double fence marks the property borders. Google *butterfly garden* and *Cambodia* and you too can find Dr. Ian Frances Kerr — though he's careful enough not to be listed by name. Siam Reaps' Butterfly Garden is advertised as "the brainchild of an Englishman". Befitting someone hoping for little or no notice, there's neither a contact number nor an email address listed.

LEONARD CLER-CUNNINGHAM is a Vancouver-based independent researcher and freelance writer. JASON LEE has been active in the field of human rights in British Columbia for many years.

MAYONNAISE AND THE BBQ PORK BUN:
A BRIEF HISTORY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S ASIAN LOVE AFFAIR

Leonard Cler-Cunningham and Jason Lee take an affectionate look back at British Columbia's proud history of Asian-Canadian relations

1850s

In **1872**, a year after joining confederation, British Columbians begin a grand tradition of screwing anybody who doesn't look like them by passing a law denying people of Chinese and First Nations descent the right to vote. To be sure that nobody misses the point, they pass another law in **1878** making it illegal for Chinese people to be employed on construction projects funded by the provincial government. Realizing that this might cost money to enforce, somebody comes up with the idea of imposing $10 head tax on all Chinese migrants.

1880 sees the first of nearly 16,000 Chinese workers who will risk their lives to build a railway to unite a country that doesn't actually want them. In **1885**, at the urgings of British Columbia, the federal government rewards their efforts by introducing the *Act to Restrict and Regulate Chinese Immigration* that jacks up the head tax to $50.

Not everybody in British Columbia is convinced that Asians are contagious vermin. Some groups actually display concern for the welfare of these new immigrants and in **1883** the Methodist Home for Chinese Girls is opened in Victoria to help those escaping prostitution and slavery. In order to show that they don't hold any grudges, the Chinese start a booming business in the white slave trade by franchising the vice-ridden dens of iniquity that we now know as Hooters. In **1895** the federal government gives into pressure from British Columbia and denies the vote to all citizens of Asiatic origin. The Chinese console themselves with the knowledge that the Japanese are also getting screwed.

1900s

1900 sees the head tax increase to $100 and, when that doesn't seem to stop the yellow hordes from coming in, it's increased to $500 in **1903**. Immigration still doesn't stop and British Columbians start talking about hitting Asians on the head with heavy sticks.

1900s

Also in **1907**, Newfoundland, jealous at being left out of the fun, passes a law requiring all Chinese immigrants to pay a head tax of $300. Confused migrants ask, "Where the fuck is Newfoundland?"

1907 sees the head-whacking theory of community harmony finally put to the test. Led by a collection of Vancouver's most prominent business, religious and civic leaders, the Asiatic Exclusion League instigates a happy little riot that sweeps through Chinatown and Little Japan. Almost 15,000 community-minded Vancouverites show up to celebrate, brandishing festive banners declaring KEEP CANADA WHITE and STOP THE YELLOW PERIL. Unfortunately, a few Japanese spoilsports ruin the festivities by defending themselves, pelting the mob with debris from surrounding rooftops. Seeing Asians fight back, the police immediately step in and put an end to the merriment (because it's all fun and games until someone white loses an eye). The federal government ends up footing the bill for Vancouver's white pride celebration; the Chinese get $26,990 and the Japanese $9175. Luckily Canada will be able to deduct this sum from the nearly $23 million they collect head taxes between **1885** and **1923** (a billion dollars in today's money). This fiscal imbalance is often pointed to as the beginning of Chinese-Canadians' interest in accounting as a career choice.

For a brief period, everyone is distracted from the pesky yellow hordes by a European hissy fit some people insist on calling World War I. However, once that skirmish ends in **1918**, British Columbia returns to its favourite sport of Asian-bashing by passing a law making it illegal to hire white women to work in Chinese-owned restaurants and laundries. Terrified by the threat to their now booming opium and white slave trade the Chinese community challenges the law in the courts, but the clever province outflanks them by making it illegal for Chinese people to hire lawyers.

With the railway finally completed, the government enacts the *Chinese Exclusion Act*, putting a complete stop to all Chinese immigration. The accompanying press release justifies the decision by pointing out that no nation in the world has *that* much laundry. From **1925** to **1945**, only 16 Chinese are allowed to enter Canada.

In **1921** the School Board of Victoria puts all Chinese students in a separate school. In response, Chinese parents remove their children. The boycott lasts a year until the Victoria board, realizes that the loss of the Chinese students is lowering overall test scores and begs them to return.

In **1936**, a delegation from the Japanese Canadian Citizens League goes to Ottawa asking for the right to vote. They're ultimately unsuccessful and once again, some Chinese people are happy to see those uppity Japanese get screwed.

1939 – World War II begins and over 500 Chinese-Canadians sign up to fight for a country that won't let them vote.

1940s

Upon the outbreak of the Pacific War in **1941**, the Canadian government displays its usual firm grasp of geopolitics by thoroughly confusing ethnic ancestry with nationality. Over 1,200 Japanese-Canadian fishing boats are impounded. Japanese language newspapers and schools are forcibly closed. The mandatory registration of all Japanese Canadians begins and the Japanese are required to carry registration cards with their thumbprint and photo. The Japanese and Chinese wonder what's the point, as all Asians look the same to white people. In 1942, the forced internment of BC's Japanese-Canadians begins. Curiously, despite Germany starting the war and slaughtering millions, German-Canadians are allowed to sit at home and enjoy their sauerkraut. Never wanting to pass up an opportunity to really fuck people over, the government forces Japanese-Canadians to hand over their property and belongings. 572 farms are taken and sold without consulting the owners. A government spokesman swears that they tried really hard to talk to the owners and that they left a message with somebody named Fujimoto but when nobody got back to them they thought it would be okay. Even after the war, Japanese-Canadians are not immediately allowed to return to the West Coast but instead are given the option of being dispersed across the prairies and central Canada or "repatriated" to war-ravaged Japan. When the smoke clears, some party pooper notes that not one shred of evidence has ever been found to even suggest that any Japanese-Canadian was ever disloyal to Canada.

By **1958**, most people in British Columbia are trying to put their shameful history behind them. Unfortunately, nobody bothers to tell Vancouver. Concerned that Strathcona, a neighbourhood next door to Chinatown that is 50% Chinese, is a "contagious blight," the city begins expropriating property at well below market value, taking away the homes of 2000 residents. Local paper *The Vancouver Sun* can't figure out why Chinese families don't want to give up their own "filthy decrepit, smelly, unsanitary, inconvenient and dangerous slums" to live in brand new shiny public housing with aluminum siding.

In **1967**, Vancouver City Hall decides that an eight-lane, nine-meter high freeway slicing through Chinatown is the perfect model of urban renewal. Coincidentally, this year also introduces the idea of mandatory drug testing for civic politicians as it is reasoned that nobody could actually be that stupid without the help of illegal substances.

1970s

During the **1970s**, Canada finally erases racial categories from its immigration laws. A sudden influx of educated well-off Asians creates a new yellow peril and in 1979 Canada's premier investigative journalism show, *W5*, airs an episode called 'Campus Giveaway' exposing how Chinese 'foreign' students are taking away university spots from real Canadians. Unfortunately, all six of the Chinese 'foreign' students shown in University of Toronto's first year pharmacy course were born in Canada and in many cases had been here for generations. (Also, from **1979** to **1982**, Jason Lee is essentially forced to play by himself in an enclosed backyard because his mother is convinced that white people are running around snatching Chinese babies.)

1990s

In **1999**, a few boatloads of Chinese migrants arrive at BC's shores, drawn by tales of prosperity, freedom and NBC's Thursday night line-up. A welcoming province immediately provide them with free lodging in a jail somewhere near Prince George where they will remain for the next two years.

2000s

In **2002** during the Vancouver civic elections, the governing NPA party puts their mayoral hopes on Jennifer Clarke, who vaulted into the political arena through her fight to preserve the cities cultural 'heritage' by heroically battling against the unrelenting wave of 'monster' homes invading her antebellum plantation. Her description of the neighbourhood bordering Chinatown as "a ghetto" is, of course, is in no way tainted by bias. As proof of her cultural sensitivity, she points to her politically active youth; her parents sent her off to an exclusive all girls private school in California where she volunteered in a low-income neighbourhood and fondly recalls how she "tutored black children and they taught me to dance." For some odd reason, the NPA is defeated in a landslide.

2003 – a recent rash of street racing incidents is pinned on the Chinese community, prompting the Chinese social service agency SUCCESS to co-sponsor a forum on street racing and youth. Meanwhile in the parking lot outside, four white kids from West Vancouver are spinning doughnuts in their father's BMW while yelling, "Who da man!"

2004

WHICH BRINGS US TO THE PRESENT…

In the run-up to the June 28th federal election, the contest for the Federal Riding of Vancouver East turns unexpectedly personal. Liberal challenger Shirley Chan says in a radio debate with openly-gay MP Libby Davies, "For someone who talks about scandal and waste, then flies across the country with her girlfriend . . . I think we all need to ask what we mean by scandal and waste." In a recent article in *The Vancouver Sun*, a few Asian-Canadian voters openly express support the Party-formerly-known-as-the-Canadian-Alliance-Conservative-Reform, claiming sympathy with its anti-gay policies — proving that after 134 years, Asian-Canadians have achieved full integration into the fabric of this great province . . . and with it the privilege of picking on other minorities.

restaurant reviews

BY TWENTY-FOUR HOUR LOBSTER

Laksa Hut
Orchid Delight
Ginger & Garlic
Takara Bune
Kintaro Ramen
Dan
Van Ya
Thai Hoa
Pagolac
Han Gu Tofu Hot Pot
54th Ave Café Restaurant
Wing Wah

[THAI / SINGAPOREAN / MALAYSIAN]

LAKSA HUT

5073 Victoria Dr, Vancouver, BC

This restaurant tries to do it all but messes everything up. The **Laksa** (vermicelli noodles in spicy coconut soup, $4.75) was barely acceptable – we've had so much better at places like Rasa Singapura (reviewed in Issue 3). It seemed to be missing key spices like lime leaf, so it tasted flat and unexciting. The shrimp was strangely soft and mealy … a sign of shrimp gone bad? The **Roti Canai** ($2.95) was the frozen store-bought kind. The curry dipping sauce that it came with was thickened with cornstarch – totally unnecessary. The Malaysian-style **"Samba Beef with Tofu Sheep"** ($8.50) didn't taste Malaysian at all, but tasted very Cantonese to us, especially because it used dried bean curd stalks which are common to Cantonese cuisine. The Thai-style **Red Curry Beef** ($8.50) would have been great if it had actually been spicy. This restaurant has the most confusing menus I've ever seen: four, separate laminated menus, arranged according to…well…nothing. To kick it off, the incompetent wait-staff were very, rude to us. We asked for a simple change in our order and they messed it up. At the end of the meal, we politely asked the waitress to read over the bill again, to make sure we weren't over-charged. She read it back in the most obnoxious way, and finished off with a sarcastic, ESL-ridden "DO YOU UNDER-STAND?!!?" [Editor's note: "NO TIP! Do YOU understand?"] My partner and I just stared at each other, thinking "what the fuck just happened?" You'll be doing the same if you go here.

BOTTOM LINE: *No reason to go here, many reasons to stay away.*

Clockwise from top left: Red Curry Beef, the infamous Laksa, Samba Beef with Tofu "Sheep", Roti Canai, hearts and Xmas lights in the window.

[SINGAPOREAN]

ORCHID DELIGHT

4741 Willingdon Ave, Burnaby, BC

Aside from the strange location (located in a small strip mall across from a high school) and the total lack of fancy décor, this is a great restaurant to take your friends and family if you want good, honest, homey Singaporean food. The **Hainanese Chicken** is succulent, juicy and boneless — the best I've had in any restaurant. It's served with a delicious clear chicken broth and chicken rice (rice flavoured with chicken fat, yum) — simple yet deep flavours. The **Oyster Omelette** is a savoury Singaporean creation that's perfect for oyster freaks. Generous amount of oysters cut up and mixed with egg, cilantro, chili and a bit of flour. The flour turns into little crispy bits when they fry it up, making their omelette the best in town. The **Sambal Fish** is a whole deep-fried tilapia that's smothered with a tomatoey chili sauce made with dried shrimp. It's a bit on the pricey side but worth it. They slit the fish along the spine so it's easy to pick off the meat. With great flavours and nice-sized portions, two people can eat well here for about $20–30. A weekday lunch buffet is also available, but it's severely limited in selection so stick with the regular menu.

BOTTOM LINE: *One of the most consistently enjoyable Singaporean restaurants around.*

Top: Sambal Fish. Bottom: Oyster Omlette. Right: Hainanese Chicken.

Clockwise from top left: Satay, Charbroiled Pork Toro, Indonesian Mee Goreng, Eggplant with Spicy Garlic, Chicken Hot Pot.

[MALAYSIAN]

GINGER & GARLIC

2106 West 41st Ave, Vancouver, BC
http://www.gingerandgarlic.com

The **Satays** ($1.25 each, choice of chicken, beef, pork or lamb) were not bad by any means, but not amazing either. The **Indonesian Mee Goreng** ($8.95) was tasty, not too oily. **Chicken with Coconut Sauce in Hot Pot** ($10.95) was absolutely delicious. It uses boneless free range chicken which makes regular chicken taste bland in comparison. The coconut sauce was great on rice, and the taro root in the bottom of the pot was a nice treat — top-notch dish. The **Malaysian Charbroiled Pork Toro** ($10.95) was like a fancier version of Chinese BBQ pork (*cha-siu*) — carmelized on the outside and still a little juicy on the inside. The **Eggplant with Spicy Garlic and Dry Shrimp** ($9.95) was a nice change from all the mushy eggplant dishes. The eggplant here is cooked dry and left in medium-firm chunks that taste great with rice — a very popular dish. The cooking here is very competent, and the serving size is pretty good. Expect to spend about $30 for two people.

BOTTOM LINE: *Good Malaysian food in a clean, comfortable atmosphere.*

[JAPANESE]

TAKARA BUNE

6459 Victoria Dr, Vancouver, BC

The **Chirashi Don** ($12.95) had fresh clean flavours and a nice selection of toppings. The carrot and asparagus inside the **Special Deep-Fried Roll** ($4.00) was overcooked (tasted soft and mushy). It would've been much better if the vegetables were crisper. The **Saba Bento Box** ($10.50) was excellent: deliciously grilled meaty mackerel served with well-executed light and crispy tempura, tamago (egg omelette) and ohitashi (cold spinach salad, like gomae except with soy sauce instead of sesame). Prices for nigiri sushi are in the slightly higher range ($1.40-2.90 per piece) but you can be assured of the quality and freshness. Expect to pay $25-30 for two people.

BOTTOM LINE: *A good family-run Japanese restaurant.*

From left: Chirashi Don, Saba Bento Box, Deep-Fried Roll.

[JAPANESE]

KINTARO RAMEN

788 Denman St, Vancouver, BC

Fast hot comfort food here. Perfectly-cooked ramen noodles served in a bowl of hot steaming pork bone broth (which they make fresh daily). The **Shoyu (Soy Sauce) Ramen** ($6.25) comes with bean sprouts, bamboo shoots (the most delicious I've ever tasted), and a slice of fatty BBQ pork (you can also choose lean pork if you want). I wish they gave a bit more meat, but otherwise this is ramen perfection! I cannot get over how delicious the broth is here. They also have a **Cheese Ramen** ($7.95) that contains corn and cheese! Something I'll definitely have to try next time. Two people can eat well for $15–20.

BOTTOM LINE: *Best ramen in the city.*

From top: fast service, Shoyu Ramen.

[JAPANESE]

DAN

2511 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC

Clockwise from top left: Tuna Tataki, Oysters, Shiitake Tempura, an assortment of sushi, Maguro Gomaae.

The Japanese tapas thing has exploded in Vancouver in the past couple years. This fairly new restaurant is run by people who used to work at places like Taka Sushi on West 4th (reviewed last issue but has since closed and reopened as Yuji's, yet another Japanese tapas restaurant) and Shiro on Cambie. We found the tapas here to be pricey and small (as usual) and not really worth it. The **Tuna Tataki** ($7.50) was well-presented and looked delicious but I was struggling to taste the tuna among the rest of the ingredients. The **Stella Bay Oysters** (two for $3.50) were minuscule. The **Maguro Gomaae** ($6.50) had chunks of tuna and avocado mixed with a sesame sauce, but was finished off in a couple bites. On the other hand, the nigiri sushi here is reasonably-priced. The salmon, tuna and saba nigiri that I got was nicely done and tasted fresh and clean, but the **Umeshiso Roll** ($2.50) was terrific. The tantalizing smear of pickled plums combined with cucumber and Japanese basil was an amazing experience for such a humble-looking roll. The **Shiitake Mushroom Tempura** ($3.00) was another high point of the meal: fresh shiitake mushrooms expertly deep-fried, creating a crisp outside and an almost creamy inside — very bite was a delight. On the whole, the food was good but there were some duds and a few "[insert price] for this!?" moments. We ended up paying $70 for three people, and I wasn't even full yet.

BOTTOM LINE: *Stay away from the apps and tapas if you're on a budget.*

Clockwise from top: assorted sushi, Oyster Katsu, Chicken Teriyaki Combination.

[JAPANESE]

VAN YA

5615 Harold Street, Vancouver, BC

This place has been around for more than 10 years. It's not hard to see why when you walk into this busy hole-in-the-wall and taste the food. The nigiri sushi isn't cheap, but tastes great. If you're a fried-food fiend, you'll be happy to know that the tempura here is always light and crispy, and the **Oyster Katsu** is delicious with a light panko coating. The "special combinations" here have been a staple since they first opened, and are still a good no-brainer way of getting a tasty meal. Service can get a bit hectic at times, especially when they're packed, so try to visit them during less busy hours. $20–25 for two people.

BOTTOM LINE: *Consistent authentic Japanese food at a reliable restaurant.*

[VIETNAMESE]

THAI HOA

1625 Kingsway, Vancouver, BC

Seafood and Pork with Vermicelli in Soup ($6.50) was chock full of goodies, but the broth was bland. **Phnom Penh Style Salad Rolls** ($5.00) were a little weird for my taste. They contained slices of Chinese sausage, vermicelli and lots of crushed peanuts. Regular salad rolls might've been a better choice. The **Spring Rolls and Beef Brochette on Vermicelli** ($6.50) was problematic. The flavour of the spring rolls and beef were excellent, but the fish sauce was not strong enough, which was a real letdown because without a strong tasty fish sauce, dishes like vermicelli are ruined. On the whole, the flavours here were a little weak, lacking in saltiness. But I guess that's what the salt shaker is for. As with most Vietnamese restaurants, two can have a good meal for under $20.

BOTTOM LINE: *Not bad, but not great either.*

Clockwise from top: Seafood and Pork with Vermicelli in Soup, Spring Rolls and Beef on Vermicelli, Phnon Penh Style Salad Rolls.

Above and top right: beef fondue, beef grilled three different ways, the happy cow on the window.

[VIETNAMESE]

PAGOLAC

10566 – 97th St, Edmonton, Alberta

This dark and dingy place is **the** place to go to if you want to eat a special Vietnamese dinner known as **"7 Kinds of Beef"** ($26.50, feeds two). Starts off with beef fondue, which is sliced raw beef that you cook in a small pot of vinegary broth. Then come a stack of rice paper with which you wrap lettuce, bean sprouts, carrots, basil, vermicelli and an assortment of yummy grilled beef (done three different ways). You dip your wrap into fish sauce and devour (sort of like a do-it-yourself salad roll). Next are cubes of beef tenderloin (tenderized to hell with tenderizing powder, but served in a delicious goopy gravy), steamed "beef loaf" (ground beef mixed with egg and vermicelli then steamed) and lastly, beef congee to fill you up. The restaurant feels like a converted Greek restaurant, but there's a cool cartoon of a cow on the window…how can you go wrong?

BOTTOM LINE: *It's ghetto, but that's what makes it great.*

Top: Kimchi Hot Pot served with a side of super-garlicy Marinated Beef Tendon. Left: Korean Style Noodle in Soup. Right: Korean BBQ on Rice.

[KOREAN / TAIWANESE]

HAN GU TOFU HOT POT

Crystal Mall
1218 – 4500 Kingsway, Vancouver, BC

This Taiwanese-run restaurant serves Korean inspired single-serving hot pot dishes. The **Korean Style Kimchi Hot Pot** ($5.95) was quite hot (I **did** ask for spicy), but the steel bowl it came in kept it piping hot for a long time, which made the dish almost painful for me to eat. The kimchi tasted a little strange, a bit on the sweet side, which made the soup a bit sweet as well — which is weird because kimchi is supposed to be salty. They need to be a bit more generous with the meat as well. **Korean Style Noodle in Soup** ($5.95) was ordered medium spicy, but was still a bit too hot (aggravated by the steel bowl). **Korean BBQ on Rice** ($6.95) had a fair amount of meat flavoured with chili flakes/paste and served with a bit of spicy tofu, poached egg, and two kinds of cold vegetable. The flavour was ok, but we've had much better at a real Korean restaurant. They also have marinated Taiwanese side dishes like beef tendon and pig's ear. We tried the **Marinated Beef Tendon** ($2.50) which was served with a goopy and extremely garlicky sauce on top. The tendon was quite firm and was a nice change from the usual mushy gelatinous tendon we're used to. They also have bubble drinks here, but they were out of the "pearls" when we were there. In fact, they were out of the pig's ear as well, so maybe they should do a better job managing their inventory. Two people can easily eat for under $15, but who cares?

BOTTOM LINE: *You can find better at a true Korean restaurant.*

Left: Curry Chicken on Rice. Top: Wonton Noodles. Middle: there's a pork chop under there somewhere. Bottom: at least the décor is nice and clean.

[HONG KONG]

54TH AVE CAFÉ RESTAURANT

7088 Kerr St, Vancouver, BC

The most boring name for a restaurant ever. They serve Hong Kong café style food: big portions and interesting interpretations of Western cuisine like **Pork Chops with Cream Sauce on Rice**. We found the flavours here to be weak, especially the **Curry on Rice** dishes. The **Tomato on Rice** dishes were a bit more flavourful, but the **Wonton Noodles** were quite inadequate in comparison to what you can get at a zillion other restaurants in Vancouver.

BOTTOM LINE: *Blah.*

Clockwise from top: Shanghai Juicy Buns, Spicy Eggplant, Shanghai Noodles, Tofu Hot Pot, Potstickers.

[SHANGHAI / SZECHUAN]

WING WAH

260 East Broadway, Vancouver, BC

The first visit was disappointing. We ordered **Minced Pork Lettuce Wrap** and it was flavourless. The **Beef with Deep-Fried Lettuce** was strange; the flavour was interesting but the deep-fried lettuce made the dish too oily. The second visit with a large group was **much** better. The **Shanghai Juicy Buns** were very tasty and juicy. Be sure to eat them while they're piping hot! The **Tofu Hot Pot** was tasty and chock full of fried tofu, squid and pork. The **Potstickers** (restaurant-made) were the biggest, fattest, meatiest potstickers I've ever tasted. They beat out Hon's potstickers any day. The **Spicy Eggplant** had dried chilies, Chinese mushrooms and bamboo shoots, and was slightly saucy. It went great with the **Deep Fried Buns** (*ngun see gyun*) that are fried on the outside and have soft, moist strip-like sections on the inside. The **Spicy Deep-Fried Prawns** were big and not too salty. The **Shanghai Noodles** were flavourful and filling, with firm chewy noodles. The **Spicy Green Beans** were the authentic Chinese long beans, and **not** the regular green beans. This dish can be way too oily, but here they used just enough oil to get the outside of the beans nice and crinkly. Delicious. Goes great with a bowl of hot steaming rice. We were able to feed nine people for $82.

BOTTOM LINE: *The definition of cheap and good Chinese food. Go in a big group.*

MOVIE REVIEWS

WHAT REMAINS OF US (2004)
Directors: François Prévost, Hugo Latullipe
Country: Canada

The most controversial — and important — film shown at this year's Hot Docs documentary film festival in Toronto was *What Remains of Us*. Eight years in the making, *What Remains of Us* follows three Canadian filmmakers (two Quebecois and one Tibetan) secretly showing a videotaped message from the exiled Dalai Lama to his people in Tibet. The occupying Chinese government strictly forbids images and text of the holy man from reaching the public. Fearing that a Chinese official would photograph the Tibetans who appear in the film, the producers at the National Film Board searched the two sold-out audiences for cameras.

The NFB has good reason to be paranoid. Since 1950, the Chinese government has systematically imprisoned, tortured and slaughtered Tibetans, forcing countless families to scatter across the globe. Ironically, their migration has only popularized Buddhism and the Dalai Lama. The Hot Docs screening received a lot of attention since it coincided with the Dalai Lama's headline-grabbing visit to Toronto. However, aside from a limited run in Toronto and a special invitation to Cannes, *What Remains of Us* may see only a handful of screenings in Canada. If it plays in your town, go see it.

What Remains of Us is a moving film from start to end. It chronicles a dying nation, colonized by Chinese colonialists who steal Tibet's natural resources and oppress its people. It is touching to see an entire family huddled around a small DV monitor to catch a rare glimpse of their leader. Younger Tibetans have never seen the Dalai Lama's face and are startled. Many others cry. Toronto audiences at both screenings rewarded the filmmakers with rare standing ovations.

While the Dalai Lama urges his people to remain strong, the outlook of the narrator (herself Tibetan) is grim. She sees little future for her people, and questions the value of non-violent resistance in the face of brutality. This is political filmmaking at its best. **ALLAN TONG**

TAKE OUT (2004)
Starring: Charles Jang
Directors: Sean Baker, Shih-ching Tsou
Country: USA

FACE (2004)
Starring: Bai Ling, Kristy Wu
Director: Bertha Bay-Sa Pan
Country: USA

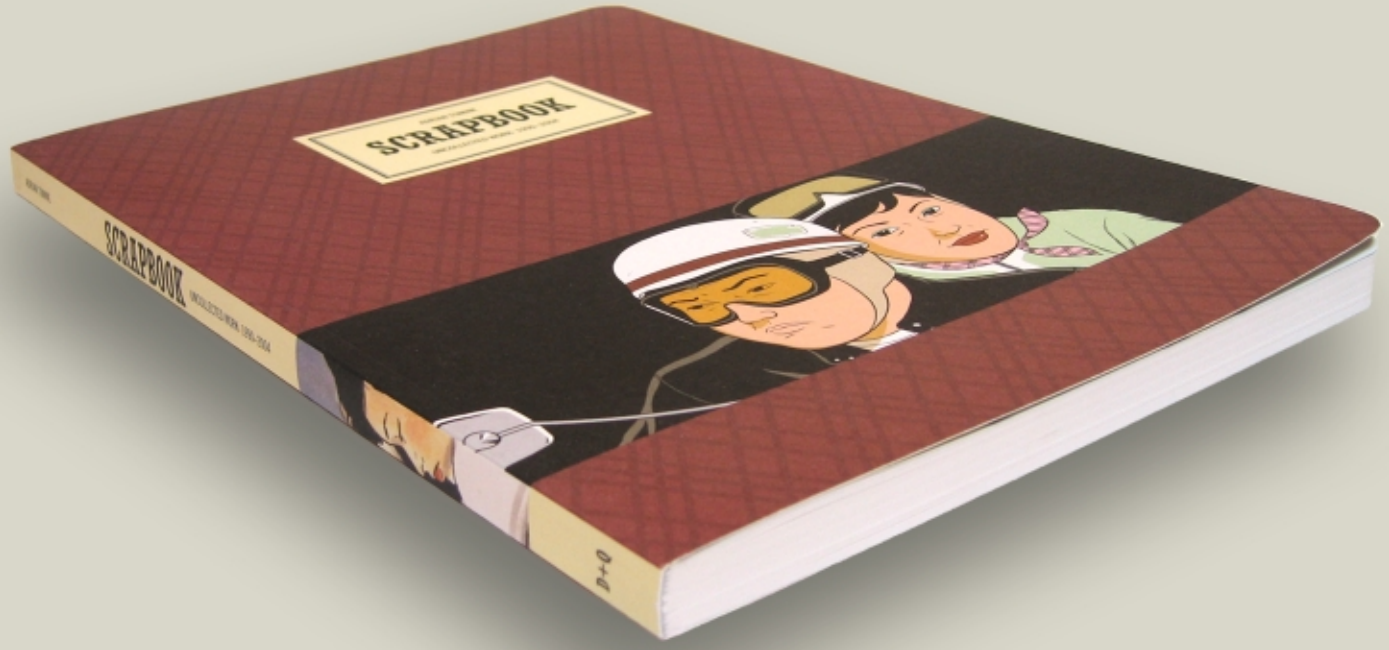
Ming Ding (Charles Jang) is a Chinese illegal, delivering food for a Chinese greasy spoon in upper Manhattan. Ming desperately owes money to the smugglers who sneaked him into America and has until the end of the day to settle. To pay them, Ming must earn twice as many tips as usual on his shift. In the social-realist tradition of *Bicycle Thief*, *Take Out* follows Ming, snaking through traffic while bags of hot noodles and rice dangle from his handlebars, delivering food to people who don't speak his language. His job is a grind, interspersed with moments of laughs and quarrels among his Chinese co-workers.

Directors Sean Baker and Shih-ching Tsou employ a "run-and-gun" method of filmmaking, capturing on digital video both professional and non-professional actors performing at actual locations. This style captures the raw energy of the story and locale, but at times is too rough for its own good and detracts from the force of the story. Jang's performance is sympathetic, but his sidekick Young (a fine Jeng-Hua Yu) nearly steals the show with his wisecracking charm. All in all, the film's virtue is revealing the daily life of Chinese illegals, grinding out a living in the hopes of feeding their families back home.

Take Out graced this year's Slamdance Film Festival and Toronto's recent ReelWorld Fest, and is currently seeking distribution. A film of this quality will likely find a home and should be seen.

New York is also the setting of *Face*, a drama about mothers and daughters set in Chinatown. Audiences at ReelWorld were divided over this debut feature by Bertha Bay-Sa Pan. Women detested the film, finding the characters shallow. Ironically, men enjoyed this feature about a Chinese-American teenager (Bai Ling) who abandons her daughter and the husband who raped her, then returns about 18 years later to mend their relationship. Told in flashbacks, *Face* flounders on the one-note characterization of its lead, the daughter (Kristy Wu), who remains angry and unforgiving throughout. However, Bai Ling's powerful performance redeems the film. ALLAN TONG

Left: One-note characterizations in *Face*. Above: The daily life of Chinese illegals in *Take Out*.



GEEK'S ORGASMIC OBJECT OF THE MONTH
ADRIAN TOMINE'S *SCRAPBOOK: UNCOLLECTED WORK 1990 – 2004*

Kick-ass Asian-American comic artist Adrian Tomine gathers up a bunch of his unpublished comics, sketches and other ephemera in this cool volume. Adrian is the (slow) artist behind the *Optic Nerve* series, which has had about one issue per year for the last decade. If you loved Daniel Clowes' *Ghost World* (movie or comic) then Adrian's stuff is right up your alley — the same kind of offbeat stories about agnsty lovelorn youth are on display here. Plus he draws really cute Asian chicks. **DENNIS CHUI**

Further reading:
32 Stories, *Sleepwalk and Other Stories*, *Summer Blonde*.
Available at better comic shops, bookstores and **www.drawnandquarterly.com**.

YUMMY PRODUCT OF THE MONTH: GLICO CURRY

It's a delicious instant curry that's smooth, gravy-like and perfect for people who can't cook. Just boil up some meat and veg, then add the solid curry blocks. The blocks melt like butter and create a heavenly sauce that smells as good as it tastes. Japanese curry restaurants serve the exact same stuff! Now you can have it in the comfort of your own home. For experts, try frying up some breaded pork chops and serve it on rice with this sauce poured on top — instant tonkatsu curry! Note that the "hot" stuff is actually pretty mild, so even your grandmother can eat the "mild" stuff. Available at better Asian markets. **DENNIS CHUI**

Also worth a try: S&B Golden Curry, Vermont Curry.

Want to contribute?

We're looking for people who can write informative articles on Asian-Canadian culture and entertainment. Music, movie and DVD reviews are welcome too, as long as they're knowledgeable and well-informed.

If you've got a good idea and the ability to turn it into something real, email us at info@bambooda.ca and we'll go from there.

This 'zine is a labour of love that we do in our spare time. Nobody gets paid. We can only offer glory, experience and personal satisfaction.

We also offer full-page ads and design services to desirable parties. Email us at the address above and we'll talk!

Thanks for reading!